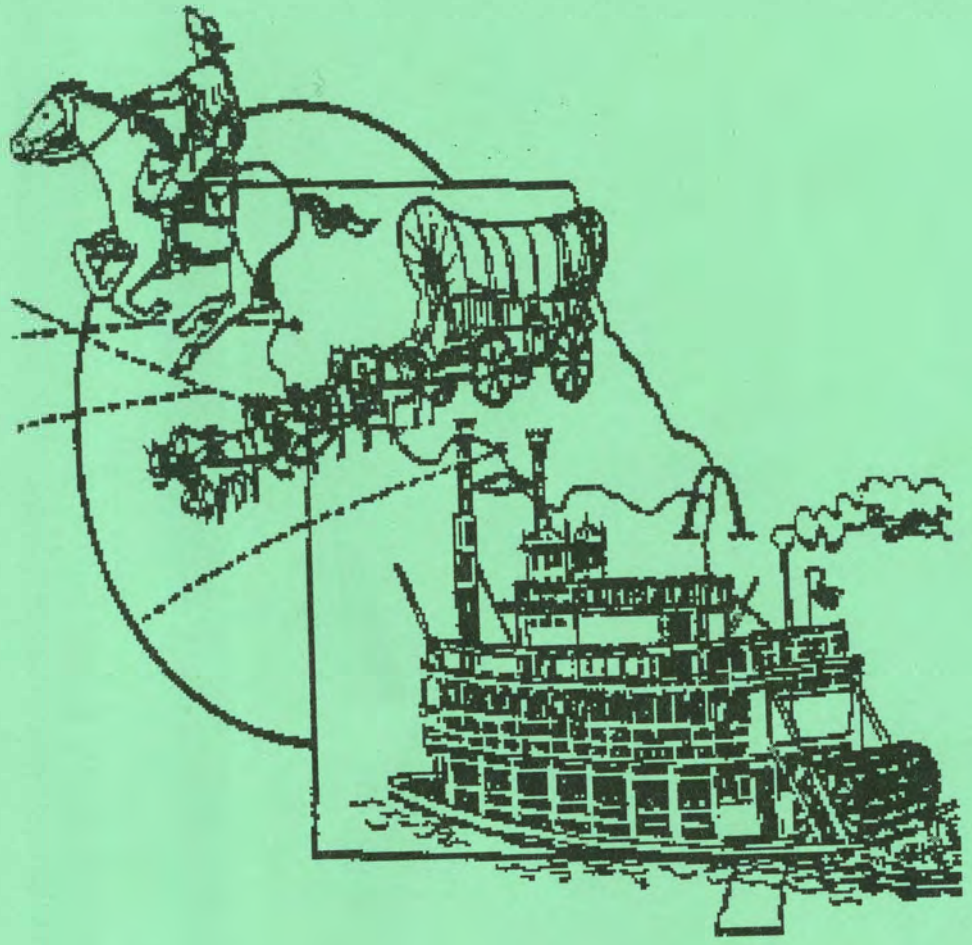

Toward The Setting Sun

2nd Series, Vol. 5, No. 1 Fall, 2006

TOWARD THE SETTING SUN

The Historical Journal of the Missouri Conference

The United Methodist Church

Second Series

Volume 5, No. 1 Fall, 2006

INTRODUCTION

This year of our Lord 2006 marks the 50th anniversary of the ordination of women in The Methodist Church. John Finley, Archivist of the Missouri United Methodist Archives at Central Methodist University, has done a masterful piece of work in calling to our attention those women pioneers who were ordained prior to 1956 in the predecessor denominations of The United Methodist Church. As his article indicates, there is still much to learn about these pioneering women, and the editorial door of *Toward The Setting Sun* is open to stories, articles, and information about them.

Our second article is about the Lake Creek Camp Meeting, an institution that continues to this day. The author is Ray Varnado. Ray is a native of Louisiana, but at the time of the writing was pastor at Lake Creek and a student at St. Paul School of Theology in Kansas City. This article was originally a paper submitted to the editor for partial completion of the requirements for a course in United Methodist History at the seminary.

The excerpt from Leftwich's. "Martyrdom in Missouri" is not only a good story, but also a good reminder that we all know little stories like this one about our own church, or some other United Methodist (or predecessor body) institution. We'd love to print those to share with all our readers. Please send those to me.

We're grateful for both these articles, and all those that are yet to come. We have more material on hand, ready for future issues, but always welcome new articles or new ideas for articles. If you would like to write for *Toward the Setting Sun*, but aren't sure about your topic, we have a "wish list." We also offer encouragement and suggestions for articles on which you are working. If you don't have a major article, we have a section of "Historical Notes" that is an excellent place for short articles, even paragraphs, about some area of history in your community that relates to churches in the Wesleyan tradition. Contact me at jogooch@aol.com with ideas, articles, questions, suggestions.

John O. Gooch
Editor

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Women Clergy in Missouri Methodist History, 1877—1956

John D. Finley

This year, 2006, has been a time of celebration for women clergy in the United Methodist Church. Fifty years ago the Methodist Church granted women clergy the right to be full members of annual conferences. Of course, this milestone did not occur in a vacuum. It was achieved after many years of struggle on the part of many women in the Methodist tradition. In the recently published book, *Courageous Past, Bold Future: The Journey Toward Full Clergy Rights for Women in the United Methodist Church*, Pat Thompson shares the stories of the first women in each annual conference to receive full clergy rights following 1956. She also shares the stories of women who held full membership status in the earlier traditions that are now part of the United Methodist Church.[1]

All of the traditions that Pat Thompson discussed had members and ministers in Missouri at one time or another. This article explores the part that women clergy played in the Methodist related traditions of the state prior to 1956, or in the case of the Evangelical United Brethren, prior to the 1968 merger with the Methodist Church. It is based primarily upon an examination of the published and manuscript records of these organizations.

From the early 1800s on, the majority of Methodists in Missouri were members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, which split north and south in 1844. However, other Methodist-related traditions, such as the Methodist Protestants and the United Brethren, have often played an important part in Missouri cultural and religious history, even though they had fewer adherents.

Methodist Protestant Women Clergy

The Methodist Protestant Church was organized in Baltimore in 1830 by a group of Methodist reformers who had grown dissatisfied with episcopal polity and had a desire for more lay representation at the annual and general conference levels. The Missouri Conference of the MPC first met in 1844 at Mount Pisgah Camp Ground near Springfield. Following the Civil War the reorganized Missouri Conference [MPC records often use the term "District"] included the counties of Greene, St. Clair, Hickory, Jasper, Laclede, Webster, Polk, Johnson, Benton, Dallas , Pettis, and Douglas.

The membership was always small. In 1938, just before Unification, there were about fifty clergy members and this was probably the largest it had ever been.[2]

Maggie Ritchie Elliott was probably the first woman in Missouri to be ordained elder and accepted into full membership by an annual conference in the United Methodist tradition. On October 19, 1877, during the eleventh session of the Missouri Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church, she was ordained elder.[3] Recent research indicates that Maggie may have been only the second woman in the country to be so honored, right behind Pauline E. Martindale of the Kansas MPC in 1875. [4] She joined the ranks of other Methodist Protestant women pastors, such as Helenor Davisson, who was ordained deacon in 1866, and the better known Anna Howard Shaw, ordained elder in 1880.[5]

Maggie Elliott was born on April 14, 1845 in Hudson, Ohio to William and Eliza Ritchie. She may have attended college in Milwaukee. She married Charles B. Elliott, possibly in Tennessee.[6] In 1876, the Missouri Conference of the MPC accepted the Elliotts into the itinerancy which was evidently considered a license to preach.[7] Both of them were ordained elder the following year and appointed to the Leroy Circuit. Between 1877 and 1882 they took turns serving Lamar and a Jasper County mission. They were also very active in the conference, with Maggie serving on several committees, including the Stationing Committee, and Charles serving as conference secretary.

Then in 1882 things began to go wrong. In that year Maggie was absent from annual conference and received no appointment at her request; Charles was present but also was not appointed at his own request.[8] The next year both were absent and neither received an appointment.[9] Conference must have been pretty exciting in 1884. On the first day of the conference, October 1st, when the character of each member was examined, the name of Maggie Elliott was objected to and referred to a special committee. The committee reported, "Whereas Mrs. Maggie R. Elliott, an ordained elder of this conference of the Methodist Protestant Church, has publicly, irreligiously, informally, and spitefully proclaimed her voluntary withdrawal from this conference. Therefore, be it resolved: That her name be stricken from the roll of this conference. W.A. Fogle, W.V. Tunstall, S.W. Bliss."[10] No further reference is made to the Elliotts in the Missouri Conference Minutes.

But this is not the end of the story for Maggie Elliott. According to Douglas Showalter, a Congregational minister who has researched Maggie's life, she divorced Charles and became a Congregational pastor. She was serving Congregational churches in Wisconsin in the 1890's, where she remarried and moved to Florida. She was not only a minister but a teacher as well. She died on January 5, 1928, likely in Gadsen, Florida.[11]

Besides Maggie Elliott there were other women who served as full members of the Missouri MPC during this period. In 1878 Emma Baldwin was ordained elder in the conference and appointed with her husband John to Warsaw. He had been ordained two years earlier.[12] The following year Emma was appointed to Greenfield and John to Springfield. But in 1880 there was an investigation of John Baldwin involving the Warsaw Circuit.[13] In 1881, under the heading, "Examination of Character" is the following statement: "Jno Baldwin, expelled from conf. & church. . . .E.J. Baldwin, character passed, dismissed by letter."[14] There is no more mention of the Baldwins in the conference journals, nor is it clear from other records what happened to them.

The records indicate that there was one other woman who served as clergy for the Missouri Methodist Protestants during this period. Her name was Amanda E. Evey. Her name first appeared on the roll of conference members in 1879 when she was appointed to the Grand River Circuit. But in 1880 she transferred to the Kansas Conference.[15]

These activities at the annual conference level reflected the concerns of the denomination as a whole regarding the role of women in the church. In the late 1870's Missouri was in the forefront, along with New York and Kansas, in the effort to grant women full clergy rights. This effort peaked in the ordination of Anna Howard Shaw by the Methodist Protestant General Conference. That year the Missouri Conference had three women in full connection, Maggie Elliott, Emma Baldwin, and Amanda Evey. But the backlash was already underway. As we have seen, Evey transferred to the Kansas Conference that same year. The next year Emma Baldwin left the Conference and perhaps the ministry completely. After 1882, Maggie Elliott participated less and less in conference activity until by 1884, she too had left the Conference completely. There was a similar backlash in other MPC conferences, culminating in a vote at General Conference in 1884 to reverse Shaw's ordination.[16]

The backlash was short lived at the national level. The 1888 General Conference approved an overture, requiring the approval of two-thirds of the annual conferences, to permit the licensing of women preachers.[17] Apparently the backlash was still in place in the Missouri conference. The following statement appears in the minutes for 1888:

> *Licensing Women to Preach*
> *We, the committee appointed regarding the propriety of licensing and ordaining women to preach, judging the future by the past, deem it expedient to report unfavorable.*
> *M.F. Wells*
> *J. Jones*[18]

The 1892 and 1896 General Conferences settled the issue. In 1892 the conference recognized the elders orders of the Kansas conference ministerial delegate, Eugenia F. St. John. It also seated four women as lay delegates.[19] The 1896 General Conference finally voted once and for all to accept women as delegates and to recognize the credentials of women elders.[20] The Missouri Conference responded later that year as follows:

> *Motion made that this Conference accept that overture [from General Conference] making woman [sic] eligible to Elders Orders and to the office of Delegate to the General Conference. Motion carried.*[21]

In spite of this statement in the minutes, there were no more women preachers serving in the MPC Missouri Conference until 1925 (the author was unable to discover any records for 1898 or 1900-1907). In that year Hallie Cox and Viola Wheeler Laird were admitted into the itinerancy and appointed to Bolivar and Mt. Pleasant respectively.[22] Hallie Cox was ordained elder in 1931 and Viola Laird followed suit in 1933.[23] These were just the first two of a group of fifteen women who were admitted into the itinerancy of the Missouri Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church between 1925 and 1939, the year that the Methodist Church was created by the union of the MPC with the episcopal branches. Of these fifteen, there were four others besides Cox and Laird who were elected to elders orders: Myrtle Blades, Dona LaFollette, Eva Liles and Anna Laura Washam.[24]

The Missouri Conference was not the only Methodist Protestant conference in the state. There was also a North Missouri Conference that included the geographic area north of the Missouri River. Most of the churches were located in the northwest

part of the state. The author has not had the opportunity to examine the journals from this conference. However, in 1916, the Iowa and North Missouri districts combined to form the Iowa-Missouri Conference. The journals for this conference for the years 1916 – 1933 were examined. During this period only two women, Pearl Spurlock and Ettabelle Chapman Bettis, appear in the minutes. Pearl was the only one who served a Missouri charge, Ravenwood, in 1935-36. She was the only woman to receive elders orders (1931).[25]

The 1939 Uniting Conference of the three branches of American Methodism must have been a time of embarrassment and anger on the part of Methodist Protestant women clergy. Their denomination had led the way toward equal lay and clerical membership rights for women. The effort to recognize their full membership in the new Methodist Church failed by just 17 votes: 371 to 384.[26] Even so, it was agreed that MPC women clergy would be accepted into the new church and work found for them.[27] However, as Noll points out, "the possibilities for ministry in the new Methodist church were as bleak as they had been for Anna Howard Shaw and Eugenia St. John fifty years earlier."[28] This was certainly true in Missouri, where most of the MPC women clergy became a part of the Southwest Missouri Conference of the new denomination.

As we have seen, the Missouri Conference of the MPC experienced a revived interest of women in the ministry during the 1920's and 1930's. In the final journal of this conference in 1939, there were a total of eleven women listed among the clergy. Five of them appeared on the list of elders: Myrtle Blades, Dona LaFollette, Viola Laird, Eva Liles and Anna Washam. When the Southwest Conference of the new Methodist Church convened a few days later, ten of the names appeared in the clergy rolls, including four of the MPC elders. However, only one of the MPC elders, Anna Washam, was listed among the full connection members of the new conference, and her relation was given as supernumerary. All of the other women clergy were listed on the "Role of Accepted Supplies."[29] So it appears that at least in southwest Missouri the full connection status of former MPC women was <u>not</u> recognized. It is possible that the women were informed unofficially that this would happen, because in the last session of the MPC Missouri Conference, Hallie Cox made a request from the floor to have her name removed from the roll of ministers.[30]

United Brethren Women Clergy

There were United Brethren families located in the southwest part of the state as early as the 1850's. The home of John Harris in Jasper County was a center for the work. Henry Kumler, Jr. came out from the Miami Conference in 1851 and 1852 and built a mission church. Another mission church was established at St. Aubert in Callaway County. Meanwhile, the Des Moines Conference had established some churches in northern Missouri. By 1859 the churches in northern and central Missouri were consolidated into the Missouri Conference and the work in the southwest part of the state became part of the Osage Conference. In 1881, the area south of the Missouri River was designated the Southern Missouri Conference. So until these two were combined in 1893, the Missouri Conference is located across the northern part of the state.[31]

Although the Methodist Protestants were the first to ordain women in Missouri, the United Brethren were more consistent in their support of women clergy, at least from the 1890's to the 1930's. Two women who stood out during this period were Edna Smith Torrey and Grace Clendenen Knipe. Edna Smith first appears in the minutes of the Missouri Conference in 1895. By 1897 she had been granted full conference membership. By the time of the 1898 annual conference she had married Arthur C. Torrey, also in the itinerancy. Her Presiding Elder praised her efforts in organizing the Higginsville church following a special appointment between conferences.[32] For more than 35 years the Torreys served United Brethren churches in northern Missouri. Sometimes they served the same charge together and sometimes nearby churches separately. Sometimes they were listed as Itinerant Elders and sometimes as Supernumerary. In 1936 Arthur died and Edna retired to Great Bend, Kansas.[33] Edna died in 1952.[34]

Grace Clendenen was appointed to Merwin by the Missouri Conference in 1896, and in 1897 to Raymore.[35] She was also active in the Woman's Missionary Society and served on a committee in 1898 that planned the merger of the Southern Missouri chapter with the Missouri Chapter. It was in that year that the two UB annual conferences, Southern Missouri and Missouri, merged to create one Missouri Conference.[36] By 1899, Grace was enrolled in Union Biblical Seminary, the United Brethren seminary located in Dayton, Ohio.[37] The Missouri Conference minutes for 1900 list her among the itinerant pastors in full connection.[38] During this period of

time she was married because she is listed in 1901 as Grace G. Knipe along with J.R. Knipe.[39]

Mrs. Knipe may possibly be the first woman seminary graduate to serve in the Missouri United Methodist tradition. In 1900, seminary records indicate that Grace Clendenen Knipe was awarded a Bachelor of Divinity from Union Biblical Seminary (now United Theological Seminary). She had graduated from Avalon College (Missouri) in 1894.[40] The Knipes both continued to serve in the Missouri Conference: in 1901 they were appointed to Raymore; in 1904 to Braymer. In 1905 they moved out of state. The minutes for that year show their address as Washington, Indiana, and their names do not reappear in Missouri UB minutes.[41]

Between 1893 and 1946, when the United Brethren united with the Evangelical Church, at least 26 women served as pastors for varying lengths of time. Only eight of them were ever considered to be in full connection, listed as Itinerant Elders in the conference journals. In any given year during this period there was almost always at least one woman, often two, on the itinerant elder list of pastors. Through 1936 the female name that appeared most consistently was Edna Torrey. After that date the two women's names that appeared most consistently were Bertha Morgan Porter Rush and Alice Hinerman Selby.[42]

Bertha Morgan was born in Stringtown, Putnam County, Missouri on September 7, 1901.

She was accepted as a Quarterly Conference Licentiate by the Missouri Conference (UB) in 1926. In 1936 she was ordained elder along with Alice Hinerman.[43] Both women served as Itinerant Elders through the EUB merger in 1946. Then in 1951 all of the women in the conference were listed as Quarterly Conference Members and a separate stationing [appointment] list appeared. In its report to the conference, the Conference Relations Committee recommended that Bertha Porter and Alice Selby "...remain as itinerant elders, without assignment as per paragraph 163 of the Discipline."[44] However, Bertha Porter's name reappeared on the Itinerant Elder list the following year and the separate stationing list for Quarterly Conference Members disappeared by 1956.

This lack of consistency on the part of the Missouri Conference concerning women clergy was a reflection of what the entire EUB Church was experiencing following the 1946 merger. Not unlike the 1939 Unification of Methodism, the status of

Itinerant Elder women in the new denomination varied from one conference to another. As we have discussed, the United Brethren had a long tradition of ordaining women as elders in full connection. The Evangelical Church had never even granted women the right to have a license to preach. When the two merged, Jonathan Cooney has shown that the status and appointments of women elders varied from conference to conference. Some conferences not only provided appointments to women but even continued to ordain women as elders, while other conferences barely tolerated women clergy.[45] The Missouri conference journals indicate some difference of opinion. By 1951 the conservatives may have dominated, but gradually the women clergy regained at least some status. However, no new women were accepted as clergy prior to the 1968 merger with the Methodist Church.

Both Bertha Porter and Alice Selby continued to serve into the 1960's. Bertha filled appointments in the area of her home near Memphis, Missouri and Alice usually served Wye, Arkansas. Bertha's last name changed to Rush by the time conference was held in 1962. By 1966, both were retired. When the EUB and Methodist churches merged in 1968, Bertha M. Rush became a member of Missouri West Annual Conference in a superannuated relation.[46]

Methodist Episcopal Women Clergy

While women clergy were gaining acceptance among Methodist Protestants and United Brethren, the larger episcopal branches in Missouri took a little longer to accept women into the pulpit. The Methodist Episcopal Church, the northern branch, took the lead by granting women the right to preach in 1920.[47] Then, in 1924, the MEC General Conference authorized the ordination of women as local preachers, though they would not have full membership rights until 1956.[48] The MEC South never accepted women as clergy, not even granting them the right to a license to preach.

In Missouri, a review of the journals of the MEC conferences reveals that the first woman to be granted the status of a local deacon was Mrs. Alice Livingston, who was ordained by the St. Louis Conference in 1924.[49] The Missouri Conference followed with the ordination of Myrtle S. Speer as a local elder in 1929.[50] The first woman ordained as a local deacon by the Central West Conference was Arabella Booker in 1932.[51] Between 1924 and the 1939 Unification a total of twenty-three women were admitted to the local ministry by one of these conferences of the ME Church. Of these, five were ordained as local deacons and six as local elders.

Myrtle Saylor Speer

An examination of the career of one woman, Myrtle Saylor Speer, may shed some light on the experience of women clergy within the Methodist Episcopal and succeeding denominations. Often an exploration of the life experiences of one individual will shed some light on the experiences of many. We are fortunate to have a wonderful autobiography of Mrs. Speer.[52] *

Myrtle Saylor was born in 1891 in Gilmore City, Iowa, and grew up in Newton. From an early age she felt a strong call to be a Methodist Episcopal minister. When she was a junior at Iowa Wesleyan she formally dedicated her life to Christian service. Her first choice for education for the ministry was Garrett Theological Seminary, "but they would not receive me as a student for the ministerial course."[53] So she attended the Chicago Training School for City, Home and Foreign Missions, beginning in the fall of 1915. The following spring she received a Bachelor of Religious Service degree. She became interested in evangelism and in August of 1916 she went to Winona Lake, Indiana, where she met some of the evangelists who congregated there every year. She was introduced to Daisy Douglas Barr, a Quaker minister who did interdenominational evangelism. While working with Miss Barr that fall her occasional preaching caught the interest of a Methodist district superintendent who invited her to organize her own campaign among rural Methodist churches in Indiana.

In 1917 she began evangelistic work in Iowa at the invitation of Bishop Edwin Hughes. The spring of 1919 found her running a campaign in her hometown at Newton. There she met her future husband, Clarence Speer, a local teacher. They married in March of 1920. Two months later the MEC General Conference was held in Des Moines. It was at this conference that women were granted a license to preach for the first time in either of the episcopal branches of Methodism.[54] Immediately, the district superintendent of the Oskaloosa District called a special session and granted Myrtle a license to preach. "Thus, I became the first woman to be licensed, not only in that district, but in the Iowa Conference."[55]

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* It would be so helpful and enlightening if we had more such writings. When sources such as this are discovered they should be shared with the Missouri Conference Archives staff in Fayette. Missouri United Methodist Archives, 411 Central Methodist Square, Fayette MO 65248 (muma@centralmethodist.edu.)

During the summer of 1921 the Speers were staying with Clarence's father near St. Joseph, Missouri, when he received an offer to serve as assistant principal in a Lawrence, Kansas high school. They lived in Lawrence until 1926. During this time Myrtle assisted her husband in the classroom and served in area churches. She even filled the pulpit of a local Lutheran congregation for six months. Leading up to the 1924 General Conference of the ME Church there was widespread speculation that women would be granted full clergy rights.[56] Therefore, Myrtle was anxious to begin the course of study so she would be ready. However, all of her entreaties to her district superintendent were ignored. Many women pastors were disappointed when the 1924 General Conference only approved the ordination of women as local pastors and denied them full conference membership. But Mrs. Speer was not discouraged. With the help of her pastor in Lawrence, Edward Hyslop, she was able to finally get the Kansas Conference to let her begin the course of study. In March 1926 she became the first woman to be ordained deacon by the Kansas MEC Conference.[57]

The following year the Speer family moved back to Missouri and settled in St. Joseph. The Missouri Conference appointed her to the Oakland Park church in 1927 and 1928. At Annual Conference in the fall of 1929 Myrtle was ordained local elder. It was another first: she was the first woman to be ordained elder by the Missouri Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church.[58]

Over the next several years Myrtle served many churches in the northwest Missouri area, mostly Methodist. One of her favorites was Amazonia, where she served in 1935-36 and 1940-43. She also filled the pulpits of churches of other denominations, including a southern Presbyterian church that still did not allow lay or clergy to be members of the local session. She began to take a strong interest in ecumenism. She became active in the United Church Women of Missouri and the Department of Christian World Relations. Looking back over her career as a pastor she stated that she probably spent about half the time serving Methodist churches. Because of her status as a local pastor, assignments to Methodist churches in the area depended upon the recommendation of the district superintendent. She had the best cooperation from those who had served as MEC ministers. "The ones who had formerly belonged to the Methodist Church South just tolerated me, never appointed me to a pastorate."[59]

Following the historic vote at General Conference in 1956, Myrtle fully expected to be among the first in Missouri to be granted full connection status. After

all, she had been serving as an ordained local elder since 1929. She explained in her autobiography that the chairman of the Missouri Conference Ministerial Qualifications Committee assured her that the committee had voted unanimously to recommend her for full connection. But when Bishop Holt saw her name on the list just before the report was read on the floor he told the chairman to "receive her on trial."[60]

Pat Thompson states that this was the usual practice in all of the conferences in 1956. All of the women who were accepted that year were granted the status of "On Trial." She believes that the bishops may have had an informal agreement among themselves to do this.[61] The following year there was some division of opinion within the new qualifications committee of the Missouri Conference, because some members felt that Myrtle should take a full-time charge, something she could no longer physically do. Moreover, the new bishop, Eugene Frank, made it known that he preferred that the first woman in full connection should be a seminary graduate. The result was that, unlike her colleagues in other conferences who had been received on trial in 1956, she was not granted full connection in 1957.[62] In fact, Mrs. Speer was not accepted in full connection until 1974 when a motion was made from the floor during annual conference, by Bill O'Quinn, to admit her without annuity claim. By this time she was living in retirement at John Knox Village in Kansas City.

Myrtle Speer was always an optimist and was not a militant for women's rights. She wrote in her autobiography:

> I accepted each gain in status as it came, and bided my time for the next. Ordained or unordained, I found plenty to do. With full clergy rights or partial rights, I still had avenues of service.[63]

Undoubtedly she spoke for many women pastors who devoted their lives to the ministry. Myrtle also mentioned in her autobiography more than once that there were many women who worked tirelessly for years and yet never were granted the relation to their church that they deserved.

Women in the Methodist Church

One example of a woman pastor who worked tirelessly for years without full recognition was Dorothy Alice Burningham. She was born in Maitland, Missouri on July 3, 1912. She graduated from high school in Blue Springs, Nebraska in May of 1929, and attended Eldorado Junior College in Eldorado, Kansas. In 1939 she married

Roe Burningham. She was ordained local deacon in 1952 by the Southwest Missouri Conference of the Methodist Church and local elder in 1954, following the completion of the course of study in 1953. She served a number of charges in the southwest part of the state, including Galloway, Bronaugh-Moundville, Butler, Noel, and Oakton Circuit. In all, she served 29 years of full-time pastoral work, yet she was never granted full connection relation. The Missouri West Conference did grant her the new relation of Associate Member in 1969, following its creation by the MC General Conference in 1968. She died in Grove, Oklahoma in 1978, and is buried in the Oakton UMC cemetery.[64]

Dorothy Burningham was one of twenty-three women who entered ministry as local pastors in the Southwest Missouri Conference of the MC between 1940 and 1956. She was one of only four of that conference who were granted local elder status during the same period.[65] In the Missouri Conference there were twelve women who became local pastors during this time. Three of them were granted local deacon status and only one was ordained local elder.[66] There were eleven female local pastors in the St. Louis Conference, four of whom became local deacons and one of whom was ordained elder.[67]

It turns out that in 1956 there was one woman who was a full connection member of a Methodist conference in Missouri. Her name was Amma Dean Hindman and she was a member of the Southwest Missouri Conference of the Methodist Church.[68] She was born Amma Dean Pippen in Milo, Arkansas on August 16, 1901, the daughter of Dr. Lewis D. And Dora Pippen. She graduated from the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville and attended a Methodist Protestant seminary in Magnolia, Arkansas. In 1924 she married the Reverend Don G. Hindman. She was licensed to preach in 1931 and ordained elder in 1934 by the Methodist Protestant Church. She and her husband served churches in the Fort Smith-Oklahoma MPC Conference, and after 1939 in the North Arkansas Conference of the Methodist Church. In 1956 she transferred to Southwest Missouri Conference, serving Haymes Chapel, Swars Prairie and Granby churches. She was granted supernumerary status in 1962 and retired in 1967. She died August 5, 1990.[69]

When it comes to the history of the people known as Methodists, Missouri has proven to be a microcosm of the national religious experience just as it has in other areas. Since territorial days Missouri has attracted reformers who wanted a little more freedom of expression and religious practice. Many of these people were Methodists or

United Brethren who wanted all their members, lay and clergy alike, men and women alike, to have an equal voice in the operation of their churches. By 1956 women clergy in the Methodist and EUB traditions were well on the way to equal status in the church hierarchy. As we have seen, much of the credit for this achievement should go to the many Methodist women clergy who led the way in Missouri.

Notes

[1] Patricia J. Thompson, *Courageous Past, Bold Future: The Journey toward Full Clergy Rights for Women in the United Methodist Church* (Nashville: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church, 2006).

[2] "History of the Missouri Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church," in the *1938 Minutes of the Missouri Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church*, 34.

[3] *Minutes of the 1877 Missouri Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church* (MPC) (MSS in Missouri United Methodist Archives, Fayette, Missouri) 347.

[4] 1875 Minutes of the Kansas Methodist [Protestant] Church, 100, as cited by Thompson, *Courageous Past*, 19.

[5] Thompson, *Courageous Past*, 17-20. Also, William T. Noll, "Women as Clergy and Laity in the 19th Century Methodist Protestant Church," *Methodist History* 15: 2 (January 1977) 110.

[6] The Reverend Douglas Showalter, email message to the author, July 29, 2003.

[7] *1876 Mo MPC Minutes* (MSS), 333. For a discussion of acceptance into the itinerancy and elders orders in the MPC see Thompson, *Courageous Past*, 18-19.

[8] *1882 Mo MPC Minutes* (MSS) 465.

[9] *1883 Mo MPC Minutes* (MSS) 469.

[10] *1884 Mo MPC Minutes* (MSS) 503.

[11] Showalter, email message to the author, July 29, 2003.

[12] *1878 Mo MPC Minutes* (MSS) 370.

[13] *1880 Mo MPC Minutes* (MSS) 415.

[14] *1881 Mo MPC Minutes* (MSS) 431.

[15] *1879 Mo MPC Minutes* (MSS) 398, and *1880 Mo MPC Minutes* (MSS) 398.

[16] Thompson, *Courageous Past*, 20; Noll, "Women as Clergy and Laity," 112.

[17] Noll, "Women as Clergy and Laity," 113.

[18] *1888 Mo MPC Minutes* (MSS) 896.

[19] Thompson, *Courageous Past*, 20; Noll, "Women as Clergy and Laity," 113-15; Jean Miller Schmidt, *Grace Sufficient, A History of Women in American Methodism, 1760--1939* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999) 194.

[20] Noll, "Women as Clergy and Laity," 118-19.

[21] *1896 Mo MPC Minutes* (MSS) 184.

[22] *Minutes of the1925 Missouri Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church*, 21.

[23] *1931 Mo MPC Minutes*, 11.

[24] *1925-1939 Mo MPC Minutes*.

[25] *Minutes of the 1938 Iowa-Missouri Annual Conference, Methodist Protestant Church*, 4.

[26] *Daily Christian Advocate*, May 11, 1939, 454-58.

[27] Thompson, *Courageous Past*, 28; Noll, "Women as Clergy and Laity," 120.

[28] Noll, "Women as Clergy and Laity," 120.

[29] *1939 Minutes of the Southwest Missouri Conference of the Methodist Church*, 4-9.

[30] *1939 Mo MPC Minutes*, 10.

[31] Augustus W. Drury, *History of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ* (Dayton: Otterbein Press, 1924) 755-58.

[32] *1898 Minutes of the Missouri Conference of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ* (UB), 16.

[33] *1895-1936 Mo UB Minutes; United Brethren Yearbook*, 1897-1900.

[34] *1952 Mo UB Minutes*, 17.

[35] *1896-97 Mo UB Minutes*.

[36] *1898 Mo UB Minutes*, 44.

[37] *1899 Mo UB Minutes*, 3; *United Brethren Yearbook*, 1898, 77.

[38] *1900 Mo UB Minutes*, 3.

[39] *1901 Mo UB Minutes*, 2.

[40] "Educating Women for Ministry at the United Brethren Seminary", by John L. Ferris and Donald K. Gorrell, in *Woman's Rightful Place: Women in United Methodist History*, edited by Donald K. Gorrell, (Dayton: United Theological Seminary, 1980) 45.

[11] *1901-1905 Mo UB Minutes.*
[12] *1895-1946 Mo UB Minutes.*
[13] *1936 Mo UB Minutes*, 17-18.
[14] *Minutes of the 1951 Missouri Conference of the Evangelical United Brethren Church*, 29.
[15] Jonathan Cooney, "Maintaining the Tradition: Women Elders and the Ordination of Women in the Evangelical United Brethren Church," *Methodist History* 27: 1 (October 1988) 25-35. See also Thompson, *Courageous Past*, 64-6.
[16] *1968 Minutes of the Missouri West Conference of the United Methodist Church*, 158.
[17] William T. Noll, "A Welcome in the Ministry: The 1920 and 1924 General Conferences Debate Clergy Rights for Women," *Methodist History* 30: 2 (January 1992) 91-3.
[18] Noll, "A Welcome in the Ministry," 96.
[19] *1924 Minutes of the St. Louis Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 43.
[20] *1929 Minutes of the Missouri Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 135.
[21] *1932 Minutes of the Central West Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 7.
[22] Myrtle Saylor Speer, *I am a Pioneer Woman Minister* (Kansas City, Mo: By the author, [1978]). [There is a copy of this book in the Missouri United Methodist Archives at Central Methodist University, Fayette, Missouri.]
[23] Speer, *I am a Pioneer Woman Minister*, 17.
[24] Noll, "A Welcome in the Ministry," 91-3.
[25] Speer, *I am a Pioneer Woman Minister*, 89.
[26] Noll, "A Welcome in the Ministry," 96.
[27] Speer, *I am a Pioneer Woman Minister*, 96.
[28] *1929 Minutes of the Missouri Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 135; Speer, *I am a Pioneer Woman Minister*, 103.
[29] Speer, *I am a Pioneer Woman Minister*, 113.
[30] Ibid., 123.
[31] Thompson, *Courageous Past*, 25.
[32] Speer, *I am a Pioneer Woman Minister*, 124-26.
[33] Ibid., 121.
[34] *1979 Minutes of the Missouri West Conference of the United Methodist Church*, 207; *1978 Minutes of the Mo-West Conf.*, 225; *1954 Minutes of the Southwest Missouri Conference of the Methodist Church*, 25.
[35] *1940-1956 Minutes of the SW Mo Conf MC.*
[36] *1940-1956 Minutes of the Missouri Conference of the Methodist Church.*
[37] *1940-1956 Minutes of the St. Louis Conference of the Methodist Church.*
[38] *1956 Minutes of the SW Mo Conf MC, 10, 29.*
[39] *1991 Minutes of the Mo-West Conf.*, 108-9.

LAKE CREEK CAMP MEETING

Ray Varnado

I can remember the first time I went to Lake Creek United Methodist Church of Smithton, Missouri, in June of 2002. I saw this beautiful, old, historic church on a hill and a campground with old cabins around the grounds, and an area where posts, from hedge apple trees, were in a rectangle. I have to admit I was awe struck. I had actually stepped back in time, to a place that revealed a historical past, and apparently continued the historical tradition into the future.

I was not sure what I was seeing at this campground area. I had been to tent revivals back in Louisiana, but a camp meeting was something new for me. I noticed a monument, which was a historical register. This was a historical landmark and mentioned that Lake Creek Camp Meeting started in 1843. It did not take long to calculate that these camp meetings had been going on for 159 years. I am sure I had this look of inspired wonder, while trying to figure out what went on during camp meetings. All sorts of images of great preaching moments started arising. I was standing on Holy Ground and still had my shoes on!

It was not until Gail and Sue Demand, members of Lake Creek United Methodist Church, started sharing some history of camp meetings that I had an idea of what this historic event was and what it meant to the church community. Gail shared stories from his experiences, mentioned how generations of his families had attended, and in each story, his excitement and longing for the August event was springing forth. I was taken by their enthusiasm and when the August event arrived, I was completely overwhelmed by the spirit of worship, the nightly preaching, the wonderful camp meeting style music, the prayer gatherings, and the children and youth who participated in the daily vacation Bible schools.

After my first camp meeting experience, I started seminary classes at Saint Paul School of Theology, in Kansas City, Missouri. I figured everyone in Missouri, especially seminary students, had heard of camp meetings. However, it was not until I started sharing stories with fellow students that I realized they also had this look of wonder, because they had never heard of camp meetings either.

Camp meetings, of past and future, will be the subject of this paper. By providing a general history, some information about the origin of camp meetings, and lifting up the purposes of camp meetings, I believe a definition of camp meeting will surface. As I work through this paper, possibly the readers will feel my excitement level rising, as I anticipate the next August event. I will examine the structure of camp meetings, site selections, some religious beliefs and rituals of camp meetings, participants who attended, and conversion experiences during camp meetings; and I will discuss camp meetings today. I invite readers to journey with me, into this historic past, and allow the spirit of proclamation and evangelism, to stir an interest and a desire to attend a camp meeting in the near future.

Many historians have researched the origin of camp meetings in America. As a practical, evangelical theologian, grounded in the Wesleyan tradition, I appreciate a method of evangelism, the spreading of the gospel, which was so effective and continues today. Camp meetings were a response to the needs of the people who were settling the frontiers of America. There were few churches and the desire to worship was apparent. According to Dickson D. Bruce, Jr., in the book, *And They All Sang Hallelujah,* "The camp meeting practice appears to have originated with the Presbyterians. The camp-meeting itself simply 'grew up' with the frontier, so that one cannot be sure when the first one was held—outdoor preaching is as old as Christianity itself."[1] Bruce suggests the origin was with Presbyterians, but he could not be certain, and additional data indicates that the movement was ecumenical.

Faithful people working together are something that appears in the Early Church, described in the Book of Acts. Today, there are those that are hesitant of interdenominational involvement. History reveals, according to Rev. A. P. Mead, in the book, *Manna In The Wilderness,* "it was something new for Methodist and a Presbyterian to labor together . . . [but] they arrived at a settlement on Red River, Kentucky, where was a Presbyterian Church under the pastoral care of Rev. Mr. McGready."[2] This was the setting for the great camp meeting "Cane Ridge Meeting . . . [where] at times the attendance was as high as twenty-five thousand"[3] and set the stage for camp meetings to follow. This camp meeting was apparently fueled by enthusiasm and many came, camped, and worshiped as one body. "The Presbyterians and Methodists united as one

in the army of the Lord, in holding these camp meetings."[4] Maybe camp meetings should be revived to unite the body again.

This camp meeting and others that followed provided a campsite and drew large crowds. Kenneth O. Brown in his book, *Holy Ground*, explains, "Although the term 'camp meeting' did not come into general use until about 1802, the first identifiable camp meeting appears to have been organized in the Carolinas or Georgia during the last decade of the eighteenth century."[5] According to Dr. John O. Gooch in the book, *Circuit Riders to Crusades: Essays in Missouri Methodist History*, "Camp meetings were a key part of what is called the 'Second Great Awakening' in American history. Revivals began in Kentucky as early as 1798, but the great camp meeting at Cane Ridge, Kentucky is the paradigm of the movement."[6] Dr. Gooch is describing the great event, which Rev. A. P. Mead described, when thousands of people came out to hear the Word of God proclaimed. This was the paradigm, the camp meeting at Cane Ridge, and others did follow.

Early Methodists, filled with the Spirit of God, were always looking for a time when God would bring revival. "By the last part of the eighteenth century Bishop Francis Asbury was eagerly praying for a major revival of religion across America."[7] I appreciate this call and evangelizing the frontier was apparently the mission of the circuit riders. Evangelizing the areas around our present day churches is a need for the churches today. Bishops may need to be eager to pray for another "major revival of religion across America." The church, in Asbury's day, started the example for Methodists to move across America.

Quarterly meetings, I will argue, is where camp meetings begin for Methodism. "As the name suggested, four times a year the Methodist in the circuit gathered with their itinerants . . . [and] experienced the wide range of worship services . . . [and] business meeting for a circuit."[8] This was a place where Methodists could feel the connection and hear preaching from itinerant preachers, go over business that was needed in the individual circuits, and discuss the need for the spread of Christianity.

The problem with these meetings, which lasted a day or so, is that they did not last long enough and few people were invited. Remember, travel was not as easy in the late 1700's as travel is today. "Whereas an itinerant's journal in the 1780's would inevitably place quarterly meetings at the heart of a 'work of God' on his circuit, by the

end of the first decade of the nineteenth century this limelight was usually captured by accounts of his camp meetings. If Methodists had gone to school at quarterly meetings to learn how to combine worship and evangelism in a large extended setting, camp meetings showed that they had graduated to something larger within a few years after the emergence of the Second Great Awakening."[9] Camp meetings, for Methodists, evolved from the quarterly meetings as a way to combine worship and evangelism and reach out to more people. The fields were ripe for the harvest and Methodists were anxious to collect the harvest in America.

Lester Ruth, in *A Little Heaven Below*, records camp meetings for Methodists after the Cane Ridge meeting. "At least one of the fall 1802 quarterly meetings in central North Carolina was intentionally held as a camp meeting . . . [and] the presiding elder in Georgia noted that 'the first general camp meeting that I attended, in the Georgia district was a quarterly meeting held for the Little River circuit' in October 1802."[10] I could go on locating Methodist camp meetings, but time does not permit. As I read the history of camp meetings, I can only imagine the desire to proclaim the gospel and reach out to those who had not heard the Word.

The main point is that camp meetings served a unique purpose in a rather unique setting. Camp meeting is an "outdoor religious gathering in which the people sustain themselves while camping on the grounds for the duration of the services."[11] People were spread out on the frontier, transportation was difficult, and the method of combining evangelism and worship, at a place where people could camp after a long journey, started the development of camp meetings across America.

The method of bringing a religious awakening to frontier people had developed. "The annual camp meetings came to be looked upon as great social events, and many a family organized their tasks so that they could make the yearly trek to the old campgrounds."[12] The desire to worship, to be in fellowship with others, and to grow in community was developing. The movements were developing and changing to meet the needs of the people.

Camp meetings varied as to when to hold a camp meeting, structure of arrangement, and site selections. "In most areas, camp-meetings were held annually at harvest time."[13] This still holds at Lake Creek Camp Meeting, which is always the first Sunday in August. The harvest is usually in by August and for other areas by October,

so farmers have an opportunity for time away from the farm during the fall season. Bruce notes, "The timing was important, [and still is] since the fall date made it easy for plain-folk to spend several days away from home and the burdens of farming, thus enabling the greatest number of people to attend."[14] Timing was important for more to come, and today, even folk who are not plain can come. Scheduling was important and equally important was selecting a site to accommodate the large crowds.

Since there were so many coming, the site was extremely important. Several factors for choosing a site developed. There was need for a "hospitable neighborhood . . . adequate natural resources of water and pasture land . . . [and] a place which conveyed the proper camp-meeting atmosphere when cleared."[15] Other history readings have mentioned hostile situations in frontier America. A welcoming region was necessary to insure the needs for worship were met. Understanding that populations were sparse, families traveled great distances, with food, belongings, and possibly economic resources, a friendly surrounding would have been more inviting and more would attend the camp meetings.

Resources, such as water and pastureland, were necessary to support the large crowds. Plenty of space for people and livestock was essential. Adequate grazing grounds, places for people to camp, accessible water, trees for shade, and a pleasant atmosphere were of high priority. Once sites were selected, arranging areas for people and structures would take place. It is obvious that the founders of the Lake Creek Camp Meeting had these factors in mind when selecting the camp meeting site. The grounds and surrounding properties would sustain the people, animals, and necessities for the duration of a camp meeting. The setup was important.

Several factors developed over the years as to how camp meetings would be set up. It was important to have uniformity and be indicative to a worship space. "The camps were organized for orderly living and religious services."[16] With so many people coming, an order of living had to be developed and the goal was to have everyone participate in the worship services during the camp meeting. In the book by Richard A. Seaton and Dorothy A. Bass, *Hallelujah in the Forest*, is an excerpt from the diary of Captain Frederick Marryat. Marryat wrote, "Outside the area of the rough board cabins were hundreds of tents pitched in every quarter. The cabins and tents were the temporary habitations of those who had come many miles to attend . . . Hundreds of

horses were tethered among the trees and provided with forage. It was a most interesting and beautiful scene."[17] This was a great social gathering, as many were visiting, sharing farming tips, waiting to hear fiery preachers, and witnessing the expected displays of emotions and conversions that were to follow.

One of the main purposes for camp meetings would have been delivering the Word of God, proclaiming the gospel, and expecting conversions to occur. Not only was conversion expected, a proper kind of conversion experience was desired. "They wanted a particular kind of interaction to occur between the individual and the divine. The form of the camp-meeting ensured this, for it was a collective expression of the pattern which the preacher had set down."[18] Bruce means that the preachers were intent on saving souls and desired a conversion similar to the experience of their conversion. It had to be authentic! I see this as the theology of the preacher coming out and making sure that someone had experienced the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit apparently had to come in a particular way for preachers and believers to see that the conversion of sinners was authentic.

Conversion experiences varied. Robb Redman, in the book, *The Great Worship Awakening*, notes how "many exhibited physical manifestations of repentance and surrender to God: violent shaking, fainting, trances, and 'speaking in tongues,' which some interpreted as a sign of true conversion."[19] Dr. Gooch suggests, "The preaching was intense, and so were the emotional responses . . . including 'falling' and 'the jerks."[20] At another camp meeting, it was recorded that "so many people fainted and 'lay in such heaps that it was feared they would suffocate."[21] How would United Methodist people react today if emotions were so high?

I suppose some of these emotional responses were not understood and "it is reported that at the [Lake Creek] camp meeting in 1849, Johann Timken's wife went forward to the mourner's bench. Timken himself was not a Christian and tried to stop her. Herman Kahrs grabbed Timken by the throat and told him to 'sit and be quiet.'"[22] Apparently, the Spirit overtook Kahrs and he was not going to prevent anyone from going forward, not even another man's wife. Going forward had a specific ritual. The mourner's bench or the pen was part of this history.

The belief of having an authentic conversion experience was expressed in many historical readings about camp meetings. Today, many churches still do altar calls or

invitations, but the invitations at camp meetings were unique. "Immediately in front of the [preacher's] stand was an area variously known as the altar, mourner's bench, or anxious seat. Unsympathetic observers called the area 'the glory pen."[23] Richard Seaton suggests, "It was a distinct area where sinners under conviction were brought to experience conversion."[24] Bruce suggests, "mourners removed themselves from the church members and went into the pen. This was an acknowledgement, perhaps, that as convicted sinners they were not fit to mingle with the brothers and sisters of the congregation."[25] This brings up an important discussion as to who participated in camp meetings or what the role of those in attendance was.

Naturally, there were preachers, but others had titles. There were insiders, sinners, mourners, converts, exhorters, and backsliders to name a few. The insiders "were those who had experienced conversion."[26] The outsiders were termed sinners because they "had not undergone conversion."[27] The "'mourners' was somewhat more exclusive, including only those sinners who had been awakened and convicted."[28] "'Converts' were those mourners who had made the transition and had been converted by the Lord."[29] The "exhorters were . . . ordained clergymen whose chief duty was inviting sinners to enter the pen by reminding them of the prospects of hell and damnation awaiting those who failed to take the step."[30] The backsliders were those that "fell away from the church and returned to the ways of the world."[31] These titles can make one wonder, where do you fit in at camp meetings. What would you be called at the camp meetings of today when you attended?

Well, I cannot answer that question for all camp meetings that remain, but at the 162nd camp meeting of the Lake Creek United Methodist Church, we will call you welcomed guest. On August 7, 2005, camp meeting starts at Lake Creek and camp meeting will go on for an entire week, ending August 14, 2005. Services start at 7:30 each night and the services are similar in style as they were from the start. The preparation for each camp meeting is intense and takes much planning and assistance from faithful people in our community.

During the year, there is the finalization of planning, preachers to schedule, singers to line up, and web sites to update. Vacation Bible school material curriculums are chosen, volunteers start gathering, advertising planning develops, and then the fun starts.

On the Saturday before, the campgrounds have to be mowed, trimmed, and properly groomed. People show up early Saturday morning with mowers, tractors, weed eaters, clippers, chain saws, and whatever lawn maintenance items you can think of. By midmorning, this army of workers has made the campgrounds as impressive as any lawn of the month. Smiles start shining upon everyone's faces, as we know, as generations have in the past, camp meeting is next week, and it is time to celebrate "Hallelujah in the Forest" one more time.

On the Thursday before, volunteers return. The tent for the tabernacle, the bench pews, the mourner's benches, the pulpit, the stage, and the bell have been stored in cabins around the grounds. Everything has to be taken out, cleaned, and made ready to be put in place. This takes a tremendous amount of teamwork to get the job done. Support poles for the tent are laid in place, the tent is rolled out, the pieces are laced together, and people start pulling this huge canvas up to the header supports. Block and tackle, a lift truck, and many strong backs are involved to get the tent up, supported, and fastened to the header. There is a traditional procedure of looping the ropes to the header. The tradition is taught to all that are first timers to the project. Years of experience have allowed the workers to know what will work and what will not. This is not the time to try something new; the old tradition continues to be the best way.

Mr. Lester Dittmer, age 85, is the person who presently holds the longest attendance record for camp meetings. Lester brings an old tractor and rear lift fork. The bench pews are placed on the lift, moved to a specific location, and cleaned. After the cleaning, the benches are carried by hand, placed in rows, and readied for the crowds that will come. The stage is set up, the pulpit is put in place, the sound system is set up, and the completion of the laborer's hard work brings tremendous satisfaction and happiness. The tabernacle is ready and another year of tradition is successfully underway.

While the set up of the tabernacle is going on, families who own the cabins are busy as bees, cleaning out cabins, putting down fresh cedar chips on the dirt floors, hanging curtains, getting beds ready, and finalizing plans for family gatherings during the week. This is a joyful occasion. The young and old are waiting for new memories

and many are recollecting camp meeting memories of the past. The excitement level is glorious and the spirit of worship and fellowship just continues to build.

On the first Sunday morning of August, the Lake Creek United Methodist Church holds worship service and Sunday school under the tent tabernacle. After services, families gather around the campground, at family cabins for dinners. It is a wonderful sight to see families all around in fellowship, children playing, people cooking, and people conversing with praise and thanks to God for the year past and the week ahead.

Sunday evening, promptly at 7:30, the old bell is rung, the prelude of the piano player starts, and the crowds enter a mode of worship. The week, as with every night, is opened by welcoming everyone, announcements are spoken, the invocation is given by the Lake Creek preacher, and singing from the old camp meeting song books start the evening.

The order of worship is similar to the worship of years past. Singing, scripture readings, and preaching, which is filled with power from the Holy Spirit, stir the congregation. At the end of the sermon, there is an altar call, the invitation. The mourner's benches are up front, the preachers converge on the front, and an invitation is made, as the singing from the congregation begins. Many will come to the front, seeking forgiveness, praying for reconciliation, praying for renewal, and anticipating the coming of the Holy Spirit's power of conversion seems to rest upon all that attend. What an awesome experience to see worship as this and know it has been going on for over 162 years.

On the last night, the service is ended in a traditional way. Everyone makes a circle around the tent, holds one another's hand, and starts the process of saying good-bye until next year. A hymn is sung, "Until We Meet Again." By the end of the singing, tears seem to flood the circle, as the wonderful joy of worship, fellowship, and the great social gathering is ending. The Lake Creek Pastor closes the meeting in prayer and many embrace, with a tremendous feeling of joy and sadness. All have been made to feel as insiders and, if you listen, you start hearing plans and excitement starting to develop for next year.

Hallelujah, what a year, what a tradition we still have and I cannot wait for camp meeting to come! I pray we see you at camp meeting and you make the pilgrimage to

Lake Creek camp meeting as part of your tradition. It is a tradition of Methodism that should never fade and a tradition that many should experience.

Notes

[1] Dickson D. Bruce, Jr., And They All Sang Hallelujah: Plain-Folk Camp-Meeting Religion, 1800-1845 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1974) 51.
[2] A. P. Mead, Manna In The Wilderness; or, The Globe and its Altar, Offerings, and Thrilling Incidents (Philadelphia: Perkinpine & Higgins, 1859) 14.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid., 15.
[5] Kenneth O. Brown, Holy Ground: A Study Of The American Camp Meeting (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1992) vii.
[6] John O. Gooch, Circuit Riders to Crusaders: Essays in Missouri Methodist History (Franklin, Tennessee: Providence House Publishers, 2000) 4.
[7] Lester Ruth, A Little Heaven Below: Worship At Early Methodist Quarterly Meetings (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2000) 186.
[8] Ibid., 18.
[9] Ibid., 187.
[10] Ibid., 191. *Note: According to Kenneth O. Brown, "The oldest of these [camp meetings] appears to be in the Effingham County Camp Meeting near Springfield, Georgia . . . 1790 as the founding year." Brown, Holy Ground, 5.*
[11] Brown, Holy Ground, xiii.
[12] Charles A. Johnson, The Frontier Camp Meeting: Religion's Harvest Time (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1955) 87.
[13] Bruce, And They All Sang Hallelujah, 70.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid., 70-71. *Brown obtained this information from records of a Northern Methodist B. W. Gorham who came up with three standards for camp meeting sites.*
[16] William Warren Sweet, American Methodism in American History (Chicago: The Methodist Book Concern, 1933) 32. *Note: Sweet mentions on the same page how "At some places log shelters were erected [this is what was done at Lake Creek] and placed about the camp to form a square 'U' or 'O'.*
[17] Richard A. Seaton and Dorothy A. Bass, Hallelujah in the Forest (Acton, MA: Tapestry Press, Ltd. 1993) 14.
[18] Bruce, And They All Sang Hallelujah, 70.
[19] Robb Redman, The Great Worship Awakening: Singing New Song in the Postmodern Church (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002) 6.
[20] Gooch, Circuit Riders to Crusaders, 4. *Note: "The 'jerks' . . . affecting different persons in different ways . . . Sometimes the head would be affected, twisting it rapidly to the right and left; sometimes it would seize the limbs, sometimes the whole body." Sweet, American Methodism, 158. Rev. Mead wrote, "others trembling, weeping, crying, for mercy: some falling and swooning away till every appearance of life was gone, and the extremities of the body assumed the coldness of death." Mead, Manna, 18.*
[21] John H. Wigger, Taking Heaven by Storm: Methodism and the Rise of Popular Christianity in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) 109.
[22] Gooch, Circuit Riders to Crusaders, 56.
[23] Bruce, And They All Sang Hallelujah, 71.
[24] Seaton and Bass, Hallelujah, 13.
[25] Bruce, And They All Sang Hallelujah, 85.
[26] Ibid., 74.
[27] Ibid., 78.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid., 75.
[31] Ibid., 78.

Church at Independence*

W. M. Leftwich

In 1857 the members and friends of the M.E. Church, South, erected, finished, furnished, dedicated and paid for a beautiful Church in the city of Independence. The architecture was half Gothic, and most elegant in its proportions and finish, two stories, with Sunday school, lecture room, pastor's study, class rooms, closets, library and furnace rooms below, and above one of the handsomest audience rooms in the State. The whole cost was over $15,000. A convenient and commodious parsonage in the rear, on the same lot, with ample and tastefully ornamented grounds for both Church and parsonage.

This property was built and paid for by Southern Methodists, and used and occupied by them without molestation till the fall of 1862, when it was left temporarily without a pastor. A covetous eye had been on it, and the pastor for 1861 and '62 had often been warned of personal danger and advised to seek some place of safety. He was several times put under military arrest, and several times informed of plots and purposes to shoot or hang him. "The leaders of the marauding bands of Kansas "Redlegs" or "Jayhawkers" had often sworn vengeance against him because he was a Southern Methodist preacher. They had hunted diligently for some accusation against

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* W.M. Leftwich, *Martyrdom in Missouri: A History of religious proscription, the seizure of churches, and the persecution of ministers of the gospel, in the state of Missouri during the late Civil War, and under the "test oath" of the new constitution* (St. Louis: S.W. Book & Pub. Co., 1870), V. 1, pp. 189-200.

Note from the Preface: "It is one of the gravest responsiblities of the hour, and one of the most gracious opportunities of the Church, to preserve the history, vindicate the faith, maintain the principles and impress the lessons of the turbulent past upon the peaceful future, that grace may abound through suffering and God may be glorified in his servants."

Archivist's note: This excerpt is presented as an historical reminder of our past. This story and many others can be gleaned from reading the writings of our previous "history keepers." One must remember the times and realize that this book was published by the author, within 10 years of the War, from an MEC, South perspective.

him. Or some pretext for taking his life, but he had been too prudent and cautious for their purpose; had pursued with singular fidelity his own calling, nor turned to the right or left for any purpose or party; had made many warm friends amongst the best Union men, who demanded that he should be let alone in his work and not molested any way by the authorities. They pronounced him loyal to his Master, his Church, his country, "and to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds." He felt safe in the hands of and under the protection of the regular military authorities, even such desperate characters as Lane, Jennison, Anthony, Montgomery, Nugent, etc., within whose military lines he had lived, and preached, and labored without any great annoyance or molestation. But the hands of lawless desperadoes and plunderers who could be used by designing men for any purpose whatever, such as Cleveland and others from Kansas, were too irresponsible and reckless to trust. Friends had traveled in the night from Kansas City to Independence, a distance of twelve miles, to warn him of threats to hang him made by Cleveland and other outlaws, and through many other sources he was impressed with the fact that to remain would be to sacrifice his life causelessly. His friends advised him to seek safety in flight, even the Union military officers of the post counseled this course and provided the necessary facilities.

While his preparations to leave were being made the battle of Independence was fought, in which the Confederates, under Colonels Hughes, Thompson, Boyd and others, succeeded in taking the city, with its garrison, after a contest of four hours. This occurred on the morning of August 18, 1862, and precipitated the flight of the pastor. After the surrender he spent the day in caring for the wounded and dying, the night in packing up and storing his effects, and the next day at 2 p.m., with his family, his trunks and some few movable effects, in a coverless two-horse wagon, he started for Lexington and St. Louis.

He had not been gone two hours when the city was re-entered by the Federal forces—a much enraged Kansas regiment—and for some cause yet unknown his house and church were searched, and every place of possible concealment in the whole vicinity visited with unsparing vigilance to find him. Enraged soldiers stamped the pavement in bitter disappointment, and swore loudly that if he could be found the first limb would be too good to swing his lifeless carcass for the fowls of the air.

Many a dark day had he shared with his flock, and they rejoiced now in his safety. He will never forget the "Black Thursday," as it was called by sad distinction, when all the men of the city were arrested by Col. Jennison, penned up in the Court House yard, and guarded by a double line of soldiers all around the public square, while the drunken negroes of his command were turned loose upon the city to free the slaves and pillage and plunder the homes of the people to their hearts' content. The insults offered the ladies by those beastly semi-savages, infuriated by bad whisky and the deeds of horror committed by them, will sufficiently characterize the day as the "Black Thursday," and distinguish the annals of crime without any detailed record here. None can forget the pillage and burning of Porter's elegant residence and the very narrow escape of his sick daughter, who was rescued from the second story only by the efforts of the ladies, in defiance of the threats of the brutal soldiery; nor will that line of burning buildings, the light of which fell on their retreating path all the way back to Kansas City, and made lurid and fervid the evening sky, ever pass from the mind. Many other scenes of similar character had made life and property insecure; and Southern Methodist ministers were the objects of particular displeasure.

During that fall, and before the church had been supplied with another pastor, a Rev. James Lee, of the M E. Church, North, made his appearance in Independence and demanded possession of the church. He first demanded the key, which the rightful owners refused to give up. He then appealed to the military commander of the post. This officer ordered the trustees of the M.E. Church, South, to report the key to his headquarters under pain of confiscation and banishment. The key was surrendered to him, and he gave it to Mr. Lee with his authority to hold and use the church. After Mr. Lee got possession of the house of worship he, as if to "add insult to injury," went through with a formal dedication service, setting the house apart to the worship of God as though it had been a pagan temple; after which it was used by the Northern Methodists as though it belonged of right to them, and without any seeming compunctions of conscience. The Church, South, had no place of worship, and in some respects the ladies of Independence duplicated the work and re-enacted the scenes of Kansas City.

In 1864 Rev. Mr. DeMott was sent by his Church to hold possession of and use the property. Not content with the church, he demanded the parsonage. He already

had the coat and he wanted the cloak also. But the trustees of the M. E. Church, South, had rented the parsonage to a poor widow, Mrs. Brazil by name. Mr. DeMott asked her to vacate the house, this she declined to do; he demanded the key, she refused to give it up. He then appealed to the Commander of the Post, and returned with the result of this appeal in the form of the following military order:

Headquarters 43d Inf. Mo. Volunteers,
Independence, Mo., March 31, 1865.

"To Mrs. Brazil, living in Methodist Parsonage, Independence, Mo.:

"It having been represented to the commanding officer that you occupy the parsonage belonging to the Methodist Episcopal Church, and persist in retaining the possession of the same to the exclusion of the minister of said Church, using in connection with such refusal language defiant of the Federal authorities and treasonable to the United States Government, you are therefore required to move your household goods out of and evacuate said parsonage by the morning of the third of April proximo; at which time, on failure on your part to comply with this order, your goods will be removed by the commander of this station.

"Very respectfully,
"B.R. Davis,
"Major 43d Mo. Vols., commanding station."

Now, let it be understood that this property, as well as the church, had been built and paid for by the southern Methodists, and of the three hundred members of that Church then in Independence, not more than eight or ten united with the M. E. Church, North.

The language of the above order sufficiently indicates the representations made by Mr. DeMott to the military authorities to influence them to move in that direction in their work of saving the Union.

To turn a defenseless and helpless widow with her children and household effects into the streets to make room for a Northern Methodist minister to occupy and hold property that belonged to others was, perhaps, a military movement of great strategic importance to the cause of the Union and the restoration of the Government; but in the light of moral honesty and Christian decency the military maneuver becomes a pious fraud, which the perpetrators were forced, after using its opportunities for several years, to confess before men.

The church and parsonage were occupied and used by Mr. DeMott when in the fall of 1865 Rev. M. M. Pugh was appointed by the St. Louis Annual Conference, M. E.

Church, South, to the Independence station. On his arrival he made a formal demand of Mr. DeMott for the property. This was just as formally refused: the occupant declaring at the same time that he "had been sent there by his Church to hold that property for the use and benefit of the M. E. Church, and he intended to do it." Recourse was had to the law, and suit for possession was instituted.

This suit was called in the Circuit Court for the spring of 1866, when Mr. DeMott made affidavit that important witnesses were absent and he was not ready for trial—the case was continued. The following fall term of the Court was held, and the defendants again swore that they were not ready for trial. Again the case was continued, but it was apparent that the motive for continuing the case so often was the farther use of the property, of which they knew the law would deprive them. They were never ready for trial, but began to feel the force of public sentiment and the shame still remained; and the wiser and abler of them began to fear the penalty, not only of fraud, but of rents and damages, and advised a compromise. In February, 1867, they proposed, through their counsel, one Col. Hines, to surrender the property and pay all costs if the M. E. Church, South, would withdraw the suit. To this Messrs. Sawyer, Chrisman and Hover, counsel for plaintiffs, agreed. The suit was accordingly withdrawn, the property vacated, and the rightful owners took possession.

The property was much damaged, and involved heavy expense in the necessary repairs. Those who occupied it evidently felt that it did not belong to them, and abused it accordingly.

To show more fully the grounds of the suit and the defense set up by defendants it may not be out of place, as an important part of the history of this affair, to introduce here a statement of the case furnished by Sam'l Sawyer, Esq., of Independence, one of the counsel for plaintiffs. It is as follows:

> "The Church property at this place (Independence), as you are aware, was taken possession of by the M.E. Church, North, during the war, and the trustees of the Church, South, were compelled to assume the offensive. At first a suit by forcible entry was instituted before a Justice of the Peace, which was moved to the Circuit Court by *certiorari*; but as the suit, however determined, would not settle the title to the property, it was thought advisable to institute a suit, not only for possession, but also to quit the title. In this last suit a full history of the church at Independence, as well as of the action of the General Conference in New York in 1844, and the Louisville Convention in 1845, was set up. In the answer filed by defendants they admitted the action of the General

Conference of 1844, and the Convention at Louisville, Ky., the following year; also, the action of the Missouri Annual Conference of 1845, but deny their authority to act in the premises, and assert that the property was conveyed for the use of the M. E. Church at Independence Station, that they are the successors of the original trustees named in the deed of conveyance, and as such they assert their title to the property. Within the past few months several passes have been made for a compromise, but nothing definite was proposed until last Saturday, when I received a proposition from the attorney for defendants to surrender the whole property and pay all the costs. This proposition, although not what it should have been, yet, under the circumstances, and in view of the uncertainty hanging on the future, it was deemed best to accept; and on last Monday morning I received the keys, and possession was at once given to the trustees of the M. E. Church, South. This I hope ends the controversy.

"I would be glad to believe that the motive claimed, viz., a disposition to do right, was the governing motive in giving up the property; but my own opinion is, they saw that whenever trial could be had they had no case, and hence concluded to get out of a bad scrape with as much credit as possible. There was a difference of opinion among their members. Those, as usual, who had no pecuniary interests, and no property to answer for the costs and damages that might be recovered, were for fight to the last, while the more moderate and the men of means were determined to yield the possession, and their better counsels prevailed."

Thus ended the case as it exists plainly in the facts of history, but there are some side lights and side scenes in the details without which the affair will not be complete. A few circumstantial details, which are contained in a communication found in the *St. Louis Christian Advocate*, of June 20, 1866, will serve to sample the whole. Take the following extracts:

"And there, too, stands that elegant church, with its stained windows and tall, graceful spire, at once the pride and ornament of the city; but its aisles are trod by other feet, and its cushioned pews are filled or reserved for other worshipers than those who built, or bought, or owned the property. The pulpit and altar, so tastefully fitted and furnished by the young men in 1857, are now served by other hands and other tongues, and I had almost said by another gospel, than those for whom or that for which they were prepared.

"The parsonage, which has housed so many good men of our church and their families, for whom it was built, is now occupied by another; and the spacious yard, once so tastefully ornamented with shade and fruit trees, flowers and evergreens, is laid waste and almost bare—now the

common resort of horses, cows, hogs, dogs and dirty children from the streets.

"Sadly I turned away from a scene of wrong and desecration to pity the moral condition of the hearts that could meditate and the hands that could perpetrate such sacrilegious injustice. What right have the Northern Methodists to the property? Did they build it? Buy it? Pay for it? Or even give one dollar toward paying for it? What claim do they set up? What show of right? If there be a higher law than civil law—if there be another standard of moral justice and right than the inspired gospel which they pretend to preach and practice—then they may have some show of claim; not without.

"For nearly twenty years that property has been held by trustees, regularly appointed, for the use and benefit of the M. E. Church, South, and no one questioned their legal right nor sought to disturb their peaceable possession.

"But during the reign of terror, in 1862, '63, and '64, under which so many people in Jackson county lost their lives, and so many more their property, and under the oft-reiterated threats of Northern Methodists and their hirelings, with no inconsiderable military pressure, this property passed out of our hands without the formalities and fogyism of bargain and sale, or legal transfer of title.

"* * *When the war closed, and President Johnson had ordered the return of the property taken from us in the South under the notorious Stanton-Ames order, the trustees of our church made a civil demand for the restoration of this property also, which was refused by these loyal (?) property-lovers.

The ladies, believing that they had the first and best right to the property, and chagrined at this refusal, entered the church one day with their knitting and sewing, to the number of thirty, and disposed of themselves in a peaceable, quiet, orderly way, to spend the day in the house of worship built and paid for by their husbands, fathers and brothers. The Northern Methodist preacher, soon apprised of the fact, hastened to a civil magistrate and made affidavit that these ladies were 'disturbing the peace,' procured a peace warrant and a constable and proceeded to the church, where he found these orderly ladies 'assembled, neither with multitude or tumult,' and had them arrested and dragged before the civil officer for trial. With all of their 'false witnesses' nothing was found in them 'worthy of prison or of death,' and after binding them over to keep the peace they were released.

* * *President Johnson was applied to personally for the restoration of this property to its rightful owners, as it had been taken under military authority and order. He referred the matter to General Pope, commanding the Department. Gen. Pope put the case, with instructions, in the hands of a subordinate officer, and he buried it so deep in his pocket that it never came to light afterward.

These are only some of the circumstances that seem necessary to develop the whole transaction, but they must suffice. The case is on record, with many others of like character, to go down to posterity as a part of the history made during those dark days. The Northern Methodist papers have repeatedly denied that their Church ever seized, held or appropriated the property of the M. E. Church, South. One more fact will be a positive confirmation of their appropriation of this property. It is this:

In the official statistics of the "Missouri and Arkansas Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church for 1865" this church and parsonage are reported and valued, the church at $17,000 and the parsonage at $3,000. The same property is again reported in the statistics for 1866; and then, without any note of explanation, disappears from the annual statistical report of Church Property in Missouri.